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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004439

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TAGS: PGOV PINS PREL PHUM IZ

SUBJECT: PRT DIYALA: SUNNI SHEIKHS PRESENT DEMANDS TO
DIYALA GOVERNMENT AND COALITION FORCES

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: On November 22, PRT officials met with a group of Sunni sheikhs who presented a written list of demands of the CF and Diyala government that centered on re-balancing representation in local security services and government positions, and holding provincial elections. The assembled sheikhs told PRT officials that they would not cooperate with CF if these demands were not met. Sunni PC member Dr. Hussein Abdul-Majeed al-Zubaidi reportedly told an assembled group of Diyala officials November 27 that the Sunnis would boycott the PC if there was no movement on these issues. END SUMMARY

Sunni Demands:

¶12. (C) On Wednesday, 22 November, PRT representatives met with a group of Sunni Sheikhs at the Government Center in Baqubah. The meeting was organized by Diyala Deputy Governor Auwf Rahoumi Majeed al-Rubai'i and Baqubah Mayor Khalid al-Sanjary (both Sunnis). The main spokesman for the Sunni Sheikhs at the meeting was Sheikh Atta Hadi Saadoun al-Zaidy (Sunni, Beni Zaid tribe), who was recently released after being detained by MG Shakir (and later transferred to CF custody) in late September 2006. Also in attendance was Sunni PC Member Dr. Hussein Abdul-Majeed al-Zubaidi. The Sheikhs presented a list of demands that CF and the Diyala Government had to meet for Sunni cooperation in the Province, which included:

-- REPLACING IA/IP COMMANDERS: Immediate replacement of the commanders of the Iraqi Army (IA) and Iraqi Police (IP) in Diyala. (Note: IA MG Shakir and IP MG Ghassan al-Bawi are both Shi'a and have been accused of detainee abuse and possibly operating death squads in the province End note.)

-- RESTRUCTURING ISF: Including IA, IP and Border Patrol (BP). The Sheikhs said that "former professionals" should be brought back to the ISF, and that the makeup of the ISF should represent the demographic balance of the province.

-- PC ELECTIONS: Speed up the process for holding Provincial Council (PC) elections. If this cannot be done, the Sheikhs suggested using the results from the 15 DEC 2005 Council of Representatives (CoR) elections for redistributing seats on the PC. (NOTE: If this were done, Sunnis would get 60 percent of the seats, while Shi'a and Kurds would each have 20 percent. Currently the Shi'a have 20 seats, the Sunnis 14 and the Kurds 7. END NOTE)

-- BALANCING COMMITTEE: Establish a Balancing Committee to ensure that the various departments, security services and the government administration have a balanced sectarian makeup. They complained that the Shi'a currently dominate these government agencies.

-- COUNTERACT MILITIAS: Prevent militias from entering the province and rebuild the security services based on national, not sectarian loyalties.

-- RULE OF LAW: Prevent random arrests, ensure that the judicial system is fair and impartial, and make sure that detainees who have been ordered released have, in fact, been released. (NOTE: There has been a significant problem with detainee abuse and illegal detention, almost entirely of Sunnis by the Shi'a-dominated ISF (septel).
END NOTE)

-- IMPROVE BORDER SECURITY: Prevent foreign actors (Iran) from influencing the province

-- IMPROVE SERVICES: Upgrade municipal services in the Province (especially fuel, electricity and water), provide jobs, and fight corruption.

-- PREVENT KRG ADVANCES IN THE AREA: Especially around Sadiyah, Jalula and Qara Tapa (Khanaqin Qada), particularly the activities of the Kurdish intelligence and security services.

NOTEWORTHY ATMOSPHERICS

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¶3. (C) Though the November 22 meeting was nominally hosted by Deputy Governor Auwf, it was Mayor Khalid who was able to keep the Sheikhs on message and prevented the meeting from deteriorating to a discussion of every Sheikh's personal complaints. This may be a sign of Mayor Khalid's influence vis-a-vis the sheikhs. Both men have at least been talked about as possible candidates for Governor when the PC elections are held, and this meeting may have been a sign that Mayor Khalid's star is rising.

¶4. (C) Among the Sunni Sheikhs present, there were no important representative of either the Jubouri or Mahdawi tribes, two of the most important Sunni tribes in the province. The Sheikhs present largely represented Southern and Eastern Diyala. Further, there was little representation from the northern areas, which include the important city of Muqdadiyah (and Diyala's hydrocarbon resources).

Sunni Boycott of PC?

¶5. (C) During a Monday November 27 PC meeting, Dr. Hussein Abdul-Majeed al-Zubaidi (Sunni) reportedly told Diyala Governor Ra'ad Rasheed al-Timimi (Shia), PC Chairman Ibrahim Hassan Bajillan (Kurd), IA MG Shakir Hulail Hussein al-Ka'abi (Shia), IP MG Ghassan al-Bawi (Shia) and several other members of the Diyala PC (mostly Shia) that the Sunni bloc would not participate in the PC until their demands were met. Note: PRT officials have heard from many sources that the Sunnis are either boycotting or threatening to boycott the Diyala PC. However we have been unable to confirm an actual plan for a boycott. End Note.

PC Elections Seen as Key

¶6. (C) Many of the Sunnis' complaints were based on what they see as the sectarian nature of the current government. Sunnis in Diyala seem confident that new PC elections will put them in charge. The pace at which PC election legislation progresses at the national level and how PC elections are organized at a local level will continue to be one of the single most important issues for the Sunnis of Diyala. Perceived delays in holding elections, or unfulfilled expectations of a victory at the polls could significantly effect their willingness to cooperate with CF and GOI, and the stability of the province.

Khalilzad